

2 Tankers to Haul Guantanamo Water

By John G. Norris
Staff Reporter

Two Navy tankers were ordered diverted from normal duties yesterday to haul 8 million gallons of fresh water from Port Everglades, Fla. to the Guantanamo naval base each week.

With a third craft for backup, the base can continue indefinitely under much less austere water rationing than now in effect, officials said.

After Communist Cuba shut off the base's normal water supply Thursday, it was put on "Condition A" water rationing limiting consumption to 500,000 gallons a day. Water hours were invoked for Guantanamo's 10,500 inhabitants, with the taps generally turned off for 21 hours daily.

Hope to Ease Rate

Navy officials were hopeful that once the tankers start operating and base reservoirs are filled that this can be eased. Under an alternate "Condition B" rationing plan, a 1-million-gallon daily consumption — half the normal quantity—is contemplated.

This is somewhat similar to summer water rationing in some U.S. communities, barring its use for sprinkling lawns and golf greens, washing cars and filling swimming pools.

By rotating the 4-million gallon tankers, Tallulah and Suamico, between the Port Everglades water reservoirs and Guantanamo—a six-day turnaround — "Condition B" rationing should be possible, it was believed here.

The MSTS ship Tallulah left Portsmouth, N.H., yesterday for Norfolk, Va., and a 5-day steam bath to clean out oil from its hold. It will then load water in Florida, and reach Guantanamo Feb. 18.

The Suamico, now at Jacksonville, Fla., will be steamed out there, and should arrive at Guantanamo, Feb. 18 or 19.

Cost of the water-hauling effort has not yet been officially estimated, but it probably will run over \$10,000 a day. It costs \$3800 a day to

operate tankers of the Tallulah type, and water purchased from the Port Everglades Port Authority costs the Navy 25 cents for 1000 gallons, 2½ cents more than has been paid Cuba.

The base now is living off its 15-million-gallon supply on base and 4-million-gallon reserve in the water tanker Abatan in Guantanamo Bay. The water ship makes its own fresh water from sea water by evaporators of the type aboard other naval vessels.

120,000-Gallon Capacity

Salt water is pumped aboard through underwater scoops and boiled in a vacuum. Steam is carried into another compartment and condenses into fresh water as it cools. The condensing process usually is repeated, and the drinking water is chlorinated. Heavily salted residue water is pumped into the sea. The Abatan can make 120,000 gallons a day.

Cuba announced late Thursday night that it would turn on the water from the Yateras River Pumping Station—the now cut water source—from 8 to 9 each morning to provide water for "women and children" at the base. This was not done yesterday morning and the Pentagon said last night that it was still off as of 5 p.m.